

NSC BRIEFING

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BACKGROUND - SOVIET BOMBERS

Performance estimates for the new Soviet Type 37 jet "heavy"(*) bomber and Type 39 jet "medium" bomber were released on 20 July by D/I, USAF. These estimates specify the conditions and flight characteristics under which combat radii of 2,350 miles (Type 37) and 1,410 miles (Type 39) may be attained.

To arrive at the performance characteristics of the "medium" bomber (Type 39), the Air Technical Intelligence Center assumed that it is now powered by two turbo-jet engines, each capable of producing 18,000 pounds static thrust at sea level.

In determining the characteristics of the prototype jet "heavy" bomber (Type 37), a further assumption was made. Since the 18,000 pounds thrust engines now installed in the prototype aircraft are assumed to be capable of being developed and improved by 1957 to the extent of economically delivering 20,500 pounds thrust, performance estimates of Type 37 aircraft are based on use of such engines rather than the ones now installed. With present 18,000 pound thrust engines, the Type 37 would only have a combat radius of about 2,000 nautical miles and a combat ceiling of less than 40,000 feet, performance only slightly better than the present tactical capabilities of the conventional TU-4 medium bomber when stripped to maximize its combat radius. However, by calculating the performance of the Type 37 on the basis of potential engine development, D/I, USAF attempts to show: USAF review(s) completed.

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- a. That the Type 37 is a threat to the United States; and
- b. That the Soviet air establishment is developing along lines which were previously estimated.

On the basis of the estimated combat radius of the Type 37 in 1957 and the present radius of the Type 39 aircraft, and in the continued absence of positive evidence of Soviet in-flight refueling capabilities, it must be concluded that the Soviet strategic air arm, even when equipped with the Type 37 and Type 39 aircraft, will represent a striking power still generally oriented toward Europe, Asia and peripheral areas.

(* - A "heavy" bomber is defined as a bombardment aircraft capable of carrying a 10,000 pound bombload over a combat radius of at least 2,500 nautical miles.)

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